1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES		
2	x		
3	LORENZO PRADO NAVARETTE :		
4	AND JOSE PRADO NAVARETTE, :		
5	Petitioners : No. 12-9490		
6	v. :		
7	CALIFORNIA :		
8	x		
9	Washington, D.C.		
10	Tuesday, January 21, 2014		
11			
12	The above-entitled matter came on for oral		
13	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States		
14	at 1:00 p.m.		
15	APPEARANCES:		
16	PAUL R. KLEVEN, ESQ., Berkeley, California; on behalf o		
17	Petitioners, appointed by this Court.		
18	JEFFREY M. K. LAURENCE, ESQ., Supervising Deputy		
19	Attorney General, San Francisco, California; on		
20	behalf of Respondents.		
21	RACHEL P. KOVNER, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor		
22	General, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; for		
23	United States, as amicus curiae, supporting		
24	Respondents.		
25			

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Τ	PROCEEDINGS
2	(1:00 p.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument
4	in Case 12-9490, Navarette v. California.
5	Mr. Kleven.
6	ORAL ARGUMENT OF PAUL R. KLEVEN,
7	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS,
8	APPOINTED BY THIS COURT
9	MR. KLEVEN: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
10	please the Court:
11	In this case, the Court should hold that
12	officers acting on anonymous tips must corroborate the
13	tips' assertions of illegal conduct, as well as the
14	identifying details before making a stop, whether that
15	tip involves erratic driving, illegal gun possession, or
16	any other allegation of misconduct.
17	Now, the State proposes that the reasonable
18	suspicion rule established in Terry v. Ohio, which
19	courts and law enforcement officials have been applying
20	now for more than 40 years, should be altered so that,
21	now, it applies as a sliding scale where the level of
22	suspicion varies depending on the nature of the crime
23	that an anonymous tipster claims someone has committed.
24	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So if the tip so
25	if the tip is, is this car is driving by and throwing

- 1 bombs out the window, okay, every -- you know, whatever,
- 2 500 yards, the police find the car, they have to wait
- 3 until they see the person actually throw a bomb out the
- 4 window themselves, before pulling them over?
- 5 MR. KLEVEN: Well, Your Honor, in terms of
- 6 the reasonable suspicion, yes. If there -- if all they
- 7 have is an anonymous tip and there is no -- they have no
- 8 way of corroborating any of the -- any of the innocent
- 9 details, except that they can identify the car, then,
- 10 yes, under --
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So your answer is
- 12 yes, the car is going there, and he's throwing a bomb
- 13 out, and it goes off, but he has to wait till he sees
- 14 them throw out another bomb?
- 15 MR. KLEVEN: Your Honor, under the
- 16 Florida-J.L., the Court has said when they are
- 17 looking -- when all that they are able to corroborate
- 18 are obvious reasonably observable details, such as that,
- 19 then there is no basis for the Court to go beyond
- 20 that --
- 21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I thought that -- that
- J.L. gave an example of an exception that the report is
- 23 somebody is carrying a bomb?
- 24 MR. KLEVEN: Well, there is that exception,
- 25 Your Honor. And in Florida-J.L, it said that it was

- 1 not -- the Court said that it was not required on the
- 2 facts of that case to speculate about a situation where
- 3 such a serious danger --
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Throwing bombs doesn't
- 5 count, but carrying a bomb does, is that it? Were they
- 6 throwing bombs that they weren't carrying?
- 7 MR. KLEVEN: Your Honor, that would not make
- 8 a difference. However, in this case, in terms of
- 9 adjusting the reasonable suspicion standard, the Court
- 10 should not address that. The Court has never said --
- 11 JUSTICE ALITO: Excuse me. I'm sorry.
- 12 Could I ask you what you mean by an "anonymous tip"?
- 13 Suppose somebody calls up 911 and gives a name? Does
- 14 that make it not an anonymous tip?
- 15 MR. KLEVEN: Your Honor, technically, it
- 16 would not be, but in the circumstances here, I think it
- 17 should be treated as an anonymous tip because, again,
- 18 the name could be false when the tip first comes in. If
- 19 it's corroborated in some way, then --
- 20 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, how would you
- 21 corroborate it? Let's say the person calls up and gives
- 22 a name and gives an address? So what would be
- 23 necessary? What would the police have to do then before
- 24 they could stop the vehicle, other than observing the
- vehicle do something illegal?

- 1 MR. KLEVEN: Again, if all they have is an
- 2 assertion by the -- by the tipster that this is the name
- 3 and the address, and if the officers can somehow, again,
- 4 by caller identification or some other method verify
- 5 that, in fact, that is the person so that, somewhere
- 6 down the line, that person will be -- will be held
- 7 accountable for a false tip, then it can be treated
- 8 differently.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, what if you
- 10 have caller ID. I mean, you have one of these anonymous
- 11 flip phones, right? You can buy them, it's prepaid.
- 12 You call up and say, I'm -- you know, John Smith, I've
- 13 seen this, and they look, there's the caller, there's
- 14 the number.
- 15 Then they can do it.
- 16 MR. KLEVEN: No, Your Honor. If all they
- 17 have is a number, then they are not going to be able to
- 18 use that as a basis for --
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, isn't that all
- 20 caller ID gives you?
- 21 MR. KLEVEN: Well, with caller ID, if they
- 22 are somehow able to verify, not just that this is coming
- 23 from this phone, but that, in fact, there's a particular
- 24 person there, if they can identify the location, that
- 25 sort of thing. As the -- as the tip gets more and more

- 1 like the known informant in the Adams case, then the
- 2 officers can take more solace in the fact that that
- 3 person is going to be able to be held responsible.
- In Adams, of course, there's a situation
- 5 where there is a known informant who can be arrested
- 6 immediately if, in fact, the tip turns out to be false.
- 7 The problem with so many of these cases, with the 911
- 8 tape -- 911 caller, is that even if -- is that there's
- 9 not going to be any sort of accountability even if they
- 10 do manage to identify the person in terms of showing the
- 11 tip is false where the allegation, for example, is
- 12 weaving.
- 13 There's no way to prove that that --
- 14 JUSTICE ALITO: If we transport the standard
- 15 that applies outside of the vehicle context to this
- 16 context, what would happen in this situation? A person
- 17 calls up and says, this is my name, this is my address
- 18 and it's -- it's not blocked by caller ID, so the 911
- 19 operator can see that that's the name, that's the
- 20 address.
- 21 The person says, this guy ran me off the
- 22 road. The police find the vehicle. They drive behind
- 23 the vehicle for a while. They don't -- they don't see
- 24 any -- they don't see any violation. So then they
- 25 think, well, this guy must have lied.

- 1 So are they going to prosecute the guy for
- 2 calling -- calling that in?
- 3 MR. KLEVEN: No, Your Honor, because still
- 4 they wouldn't be able to prosecute them because the fact
- 5 that the vehicle is now not weaving doesn't show that
- 6 they were -- that it was or was not weaving --
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: I mean, your argument goes
- 8 well beyond. You're saying this has to do with
- 9 anonymous tips, but it really goes well beyond anonymous
- 10 tips. It covers tips where you know exactly who called
- in, and what you're saying is that they really can never
- 12 stop a vehicle no matter what kind of a tip they get,
- 13 unless they see the vehicle committing an illegal act.
- 14 That's the argument.
- 15 MR. KLEVEN: No, Your Honor. I'm sorry.
- 16 No, I don't think it goes that far, Your Honor. I think
- 17 as the tip becomes -- as the tip contains more detail
- 18 and as the tipster becomes more accountable for a false
- 19 tip, again, getting more over toward the Adams v.
- 20 Kennedy, then, at some point, the anonymous tip would be
- 21 or that the tip --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Give me an example of a
- 23 situation in which the police can pull somebody over
- 24 after receiving a tip without actually seeing the
- vehicle commit an illegal act?

- 1 MR. KLEVEN: I think, Your Honor, in a
- 2 situation where the caller calls in, says I'm -- I've
- 3 been -- this car is driving erratically. The caller
- 4 then says, I'm following the car. Now, we're at
- 5 such-and-such a location. The vehicle has just done
- 6 something else that's wrong.
- 7 And they continue to follow up to the point
- 8 where, okay, I can now see the -- the patrol car coming
- 9 up, again, where the tipster is putting his or her
- 10 credibility on the line and becomes more and more
- 11 accountable towards the Adams v. Kennedy known
- 12 informant, then if you add that together under the
- 13 totality of the circumstances, then you will have a
- 14 situation probably to do it.
- I think it's going to be rare, and I think
- 16 it should be rare because it is so easy -- as the Court
- 17 has indicated, the Court has shown skepticism for
- 18 anonymous tips because the tipsters are able to harass
- 19 other people without running any risk of being held
- 20 accountable.
- 21 And it should be particularly skeptical in
- 22 the case of anonymous tips about erratic driving
- 23 because, with the ubiquitous cell phones, it's so easy
- for somebody who's on the road, who's been annoyed by
- 25 somebody else, to just pull out the cell phone and call

- 1 in a false tip.
- 2 And so --
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Do we have any
- 4 indication that this is a serious problem? The false
- 5 tips?
- 6 MR. KLEVEN: Well, there's no empirical
- 7 evidence in the record. However, it was the same
- 8 concern that led the Court, in J.L., to refuse to adopt
- 9 the firearm exception, the concern that making it so
- 10 easy for people to subject others to the harassment of
- 11 a -- of a stop and -- and potential -- potential search
- 12 concerned the Court enough that it denied -- it refused
- 13 to adopt the firearm exception.
- And in this case, we have a firearm
- 15 exception -- we have an exception that's being requested
- 16 that's doctrinally the same as a firearm exception.
- 17 There -- there is no indication in the record that drunk
- 18 driving on its own, in totality, presents a more serious
- 19 threat to public safety than -- than firearms do.
- 20 In fact, it --
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, is that -- is
- 22 that true? I mean, how many people die from drunk
- 23 driving versus how many people die from firearms?
- 24 MR. KLEVEN: The most recent -- the most
- 25 recent statistics show a little more, about 11,000

- 1 people die from homicides by firearms, and it's usually
- 2 under 10,000 now that are driving -- dying by drunk
- 3 driving.
- 4 And in terms of public safety, approximately
- 5 two-thirds of the people who die as a result of drunk
- 6 driving are the drunk drivers themselves. So, in fact,
- 7 the overall threat to public safety is not as great when
- 8 you're talking about drunk driving as -- as with
- 9 firearms.
- 10 And the Court indicated, in J.L., that it
- 11 was specifically concerned about the serious threat that
- 12 armed criminals pose to public safety, and, despite that
- 13 serious threat, they denied -- the Court denied the
- 14 firearms exception.
- Now, what the -- excuse me.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I was just going to
- 17 say, we have held that the -- the standards are loosened
- 18 in the vehicle context because your expectation of
- 19 privacy is diminished when you're out on the road
- 20 driving along in -- in a vehicle. Does that have any
- 21 pertinence?
- 22 MR. KLEVEN: I don't think so in this case,
- 23 Your Honor, because even though it's diminished as
- 24 opposed to, for example, in the home, it's -- in J.L.,
- of course, the person was on a public sidewalk; the

- 1 person was not in the home.
- 2 And in -- in Prouse, the Court talked about
- 3 the fact that, in modern day times, people -- a lot of
- 4 people will feel more of a sense of security, they'll
- 5 feel more privacy in a vehicle than they would out on
- 6 the street.
- 7 JUSTICE KAGAN: But in the context in which
- 8 we've approved sobriety checkpoints, why should we get
- 9 bent out of shape over this?
- 10 MR. KLEVEN: Well, Your Honor, in the
- 11 sobriety checkpoint case, the Court has looked at the
- 12 intrusion and found that to be at the very rock bottom
- in terms of intrusion, the fact that somebody is --
- 14 along with a number of other people, that they have to
- 15 submit to a brief stop, it has put that on the lowest --
- 16 on the lowest level.
- 17 And so it's a -- the Court has not approved
- 18 any situation where individual vehicles, as in this
- 19 case, are pulled over without reasonable suspicion that,
- 20 in fact, somebody in that vehicle is engaged in -- in
- 21 criminal activity.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, but why is that an
- 23 important line? Why should we be more concerned when an
- 24 individual automobile is pulled over?
- MR. KLEVEN: Well, because the -- the

- 1 intrusion is greater, Your Honor. And the
- 2 Martinez-Fuentes case and the Brignoni-Ponce case, the
- 3 Court talked about the very minimal intrusion of the
- 4 checkpoints, as opposed to -- and Prouse talks about
- 5 this also, that there is a serious intrusion when
- 6 somebody is pulled over.
- 7 You have the activation of the emergency
- 8 lights, you have a siren, you're pulled over, possibly,
- 9 in a neighborhood where -- where you're known and people
- 10 see it, possibly out in the middle of a road in the
- 11 middle of the night as in the -- the Wells case. And in
- 12 either circumstance, it is a serious intrusion and one
- 13 that people are not going to take that lightly. So
- 14 it's -- it's a different situation.
- And the Court, again, if they're going to be
- 16 pulling over individual cars, signaling them out for --
- 17 for stops which could, under the Court's rules, again,
- 18 the driver, all the passengers can be ordered out of the
- 19 car if -- if the Terry standards are met.
- 20 They can --
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: White suggested that we
- 22 don't have an absolute rule with respect to requiring
- 23 independent corroboration of the actual illegal conduct.
- 24 In White, the -- the tipster gave future predictive
- 25 information, but all of it was innocent, somebody

- 1 driving a car and going to a particular place.
- Now, you're asking us to import that
- 3 wholesale. Why don't we just stick to our general
- 4 standard, which is the totality of the circumstances,
- 5 and look at what failure there is in the logic of the
- 6 California court below. It -- it looked at the quality
- 7 of the information regarding the vehicle, which is a
- 8 legitimate tipster will tell you what the vehicle looks
- 9 like and its license plate or enough information so it
- 10 can be identified.
- 11 It looked at the caller actually witnessing
- 12 the event and giving you enough detail to know that it's
- 13 not a legal conclusion, but an actual event that
- 14 suggests recklessness, and a corroboration of the -- of
- 15 the details given by the tipster.
- Isn't that the application of our
- 17 traditional test?
- 18 MR. KLEVEN: No, Your Honor. And that's
- 19 exactly what the court was looking at in Florida v. J.L.
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, that's just not
- 21 true in Florida v. J.L. because the individual didn't
- 22 match the description completely, and there were two or
- 23 three individuals there, not just one, and so -- and
- there was no predictive or no other detail, other than
- 25 someone in this general area.

- 1 MR. KLEVEN: Well, there was no predictive
- 2 detail, but in J.L., the tip was a young black male in a
- 3 plaid shirt at a bus stop. Those details were
- 4 confirmed.
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Correct me if -- if I'm
- 6 wrong. I might be missing something. The tip in J.L.
- 7 was not a -- did not assert that a crime was being
- 8 committed, so there was something suspicious. There was
- 9 no crime in possession of the gun. Or correct me if I'm
- 10 wrong.
- 11 MR. KLEVEN: Well, it was -- it was
- 12 possession --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But -- but here -- here,
- 14 there was -- the report was a crime. Or is that not a
- 15 correct distinction?
- 16 MR. KLEVEN: Well, in -- in J.L., they
- 17 didn't say illegal gun possession, but presumably, the
- 18 tipster thought it was an illegal gun possession, and
- 19 the officer must have thought it was illegal gun
- 20 possession.
- 21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well --
- 22 JUSTICE SCALIA: And it was illegal.
- MR. KLEVEN: What?
- 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: It was illegal.
- 25 MR. KLEVEN: Oh, it was because he turned

- 1 out to be under 21.
- 2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But -- but the tip, in and
- 3 of itself, did not indicate that a crime was being
- 4 committed, which is different from this case.
- 5 MR. KLEVEN: I'll agree that the tipster
- 6 didn't say it, but I think the assumption --
- 7 JUSTICE KENNEDY: No, I'm talking about an
- 8 interpretation of what the tip said.
- 9 MR. KLEVEN: Well -- but unless -- unless
- 10 the -- the implication is that the gun possession is
- 11 illegal, then there's no reason for the officer to --
- 12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: No, a Terry stop.
- MR. KLEVEN: Hmm?
- 14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: You might have had grounds
- 15 for a Terry stop.
- 16 MR. KLEVEN: But if -- if the tip calls --
- if the tips says, I'm looking at a case of gun
- 18 possession that, as far as I know, is perfectly legal,
- 19 it's like, in this case, if the tip came in and said,
- 20 I've just been passed by a car whose -- which was driven
- 21 very skillfully, there's no point in -- in pursuing the
- 22 tip in J.L., unless there's some -- some element of
- 23 illegality.
- 24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I -- I think there's
- 25 a difference, but I think, for our purposes, we can

- 1 assume that the cases are comparable in that respect --
- 2 MR. KLEVEN: Okay.
- 3 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- but not comparable,
- 4 perhaps, in others.
- 5 MR. KLEVEN: Okay.
- 6 Justice Sotomayor, going back to -- to
- 7 your concern, so in Florida v. J.L., those elements
- 8 were -- were confirmed and -- but the Court found that
- 9 the fact that those elements which could be observable
- 10 by anybody who was looking at the situation and probably
- 11 even more clearly an observation where the plaid shirt
- 12 was identified, that that didn't give any reason to
- 13 believe that the person was also being truthful in
- 14 talking about concealment.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No reason to believe the
- 16 caller had personal knowledge.
- 17 MR. KLEVEN: Pardon me?
- 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No reason to believe the
- 19 person had personal knowledge.
- 20 MR. KLEVEN: Well, but personal knowledge --
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: He didn't say that the
- 22 gun was pulled on him or that -- or how he saw it or how
- 23 he knew.
- 24 MR. KLEVEN: Right. There was no indication
- 25 as to how the person knew about the gun.

- 1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So you don't think
- 2 there's something significant about calling up and
- 3 saying, someone forced me off the road?
- 4 MR. KLEVEN: Well, there is something
- 5 significant, Your Honor. But, by itself, that just
- 6 gives the officers some reason to go check and see
- 7 whether, in fact, there's a chance to corroborate.
- 8 In the case of an inebriated driver, the
- 9 fact that the driver is inebriated is concealed in the
- 10 same way that J.L.'s gun was, unless there's some sort
- 11 of erratic driving going on.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What if there's no
- 13 way for the officer to corroborate the allegation? You
- 14 know, you see -- see somebody on the street grab a young
- 15 child, throw her in the trunk of the car, and then take
- 16 off.
- 17 And somebody calls with an anonymous tip
- 18 saying, this fellow -- you know, in this car, has got a
- 19 child in the trunk. The police can follow the person --
- 20 you know, for hours and they're not going to see any
- 21 corroborating evidence.
- 22 Can they pull that car over?
- 23 MR. KLEVEN: Well, Your Honor, if -- if
- 24 that's all they have to go on, then, under Florida v.
- 25 J.L., they would not --

- 1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So just -- your
- 2 answer in that case is that the police cannot pull that
- 3 car over?
- 4 MR. KLEVEN: If -- in terms of -- obviously,
- 5 it's a more serious situation, but the Court has not
- 6 held that the seriousness --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, let's expand
- 8 it a little bit. It's a -- it's a one-lane -- two-lane
- 9 road going down, but it merges into -- you know, an
- 10 eight-lane expressway. You have one police car. It's
- 11 going to be hard for that police car to maintain
- 12 surveillance. And you say they've just got to let them
- 13 go.
- 14 MR. KLEVEN: Well, Your Honor, if you're
- 15 talking in terms of just the seriousness and you're
- 16 looking in terms of the Florida v. J.L. exception, the
- 17 Court seemed to be indicating, in that case, that there
- 18 would be a danger that was so extreme where the Court
- 19 would find a search or a stop justified without any
- 20 showing of --
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, just in terms
- of your position, do you think they could pull the car
- 23 over?
- 24 MR. KLEVEN: No, Your Honor. I don't think
- 25 it would change.

1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Really? Okay. 2 MR. KLEVEN: Because, again, it's just the -- the seriousness of the claim should not affect 3 4 whether there is, in fact, reasonable suspicion. 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: You get an A for 6 consistency. I'm -- I'm not sure about common sense. 7 (Laughter.) JUSTICE SCALIA: 8 I'm -- I'm not sure he gets an A for consistency. I thought -- I thought you said 9 10 you acknowledged or didn't repudiate the statement in --11 in our opinion in J.L., that, if there was a bomb in the 12 car, that would be something else. 13 What -- what if there's in the car -- the 14 tip is this person has an atomic bomb given him by Al 15 Qaeda; he is driving it into the center of Los Angeles 16 to -- to eradicate the entire city, okay? 17 Let it go? MR. KLEVEN: Your Honor, I believe --18 JUSTICE SCALIA: 19 He tells you the license number, where the car is. You can't stop the car? 20 I believe, consistent with what 21 MR. KLEVEN: 22 the court said in Florida v. J.L., that may be a 23 situation, again, where the Court decides that -- that 24 the risk is so great --25 JUSTICE SCALIA: So you see, he's not

- 1 consistent. I mean --
- 2 MR. KLEVEN: No, but it would not be -- it
- 3 should not change -- it should not be in terms of the
- 4 level of suspicion required under -- under Terry. The
- 5 reasonable suspicion standard should not change on that.
- 6 The Court seemed to be indicating, in Florida v. J.L.,
- 7 that at some point, the level of danger becomes so great
- 8 that, in fact, there was --
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So the -- the atomic
- 10 bomb, the level of danger is great enough, but the young
- 11 girl in the trunk, the level of danger is not great
- 12 enough?
- 13 MR. KLEVEN: Your Honor, what I'm saying, in
- 14 either of those situations, the Court may want to
- 15 consider some sort of exception to the reasonable
- 16 suspicion standard and that seems to be --
- 17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: What is your position what
- 18 you would do if you were on this Court, with those
- 19 hypotheticals? What is your position that should happen
- 20 in those two hypotheticals?
- 21 MR. KLEVEN: Well, Your Honor, I think that
- 22 the Court may well want to -- to craft some --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: What is your position as
- 24 to what the Court should do in those cases?
- MR. KLEVEN: Well, let me start off by

- 1 saying, if I could, that I don't think the Court needs
- 2 to reach that question in this case, just as it did not
- 3 need to reach that question in J.L.
- 4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I understand it, but we're
- 5 interested in a hypothetical.
- 6 MR. KLEVEN: Right. Your Honor, I believe
- 7 that, again, I don't know what particular doctrine the
- 8 Court would -- would choose, but I think that probably
- 9 the Court could find some -- some doctrine that would
- 10 allow it, in that circumstance, to find it.
- 11 But it shouldn't be -- it shouldn't be
- 12 moving toward the sliding scale element in -- that --
- 13 that we're talking about.
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: What about this: In J.L.,
- 15 the Court made quite a point of saying, "An accurate
- 16 description of a subject's readily observable location
- 17 is reliable in a limited -- limited sense, namely,
- 18 identifying the person. Such a tip, however, does not
- 19 show that the tipster has knowledge of concealed
- 20 criminal activity."
- 21 MR. KLEVEN: That's right.
- JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Not concealed
- 23 here.
- 24 MR. KLEVEN: I mean --
- JUSTICE BREYER: So that's an obvious

- 1 difference. I mean, one case, it was concealed; this
- 2 case, it isn't concealed. What do you say?
- 3 MR. KLEVEN: Except, Your Honor, that, in
- 4 fact, when we're talking about drunk driving, whether
- 5 the person is inebriated or not --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: Didn't -- didn't the tip
- 7 here have something to do with his driving around in a
- 8 wild way -- or at least an unusual way? I'm not sure I
- 9 would have followed him, if it had been me. Anyway, you
- 10 see the point.
- 11 MR. KLEVEN: Right. But the question is,
- 12 Your Honor, is the person inebriated or not, to take
- 13 the -- the State's best example. And that -- that
- 14 issue, that is a concealed element of criminal behavior,
- unless the person is actually driving erratically.
- 16 If the person is driving erratically when
- 17 the officers appear, then there's no Fourth Amendment
- 18 issue, and it's clear that they have either reasonable
- 19 suspicion or probable cause to pull over the vehicle.
- 20 JUSTICE SCALIA: It seems to me you're
- 21 willing to accept our allowing -- or allowing the police
- 22 to stop the car with the atom bomb and even allowing the
- 23 police to stop the car with the kidnapped girl in the
- 24 trunk.
- Once -- you know, once you give away those,

- 1 we're just arguing about details, where you draw the
- 2 line. Does -- does drunken driving fall on one side or
- 3 the other of the line, and some of us may think drunken
- 4 driving is -- is pretty serious and probably -- you
- 5 know, as serious as having a kidnapped girl in the
- 6 trunk.
- 7 MR. KLEVEN: And, Your Honor, I didn't mean
- 8 to concede that the Court should -- should reduce the
- 9 level of suspicion for reasonable suspicion in order to
- 10 do that --
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay. More than that, I
- 12 want you to say the Court shouldn't. Let the car go.
- 13 Bye-bye, Los Angeles.
- 14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: In this case, your -- your
- 15 grade for consistency depends on this answer.
- 16 (Laughter.)
- 17 MR. KLEVEN: Excuse me?
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Your grade for consistency
- 19 depends on this answer.
- 20 MR. KLEVEN: What I'm saying, Your Honors,
- 21 is the State is arguing for a sliding scale that changes
- 22 things. The Court postulated, in Florida v. J.L., a
- 23 situation that was so extreme, that was so unique, that
- the Court might decide to address it without even
- 25 getting into reasonable suspicion.

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: But -- that's why I asked
- 2 you, and I pressed the point a little bit, because in
- 3 the beginning of your brief, it says that the anonymous
- 4 tip, what did you say, indicated that a Ford F-150
- 5 pickup truck had run someone off the road.
- 6 MR. KLEVEN: That's right.
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: Now, maybe you do have to
- 8 know specially whether the person's drunk or not, but
- 9 you don't have to have some special knowledge of
- 10 anything concealed to know if somebody has run somebody
- 11 off the road.
- 12 MR. KLEVEN: But, Your Honor, the -- the
- 13 idea of running off the road is concealed --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Even if the person weren't
- 15 drunk, I think it's illegal to run someone else off the
- 16 road.
- 17 (Laughter.)
- 18 MR. KLEVEN: I'm not disagreeing with Your
- 19 Honor.
- 20 JUSTICE BREYER: No.
- 21 MR. KLEVEN: What I'm saying is that, unless
- 22 the person is still driving erratically by the time that
- 23 the officers arrive, then that activity is concealed in
- the same way that the question of whether J.L. had a gun
- or not was concealed. You can't -- the officers can't

- 1 see it, and, therefore, there's no reason to treat this
- 2 case any differently than the case in J.L.
- 3 They have to be able to see something like
- 4 erratic driving or something else, in order to be able
- 5 to corroborate that.
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: And I assume you would --
- 7 you would also say, to tie it into Justice Breyer's
- 8 question, you would also say that that tip, "Somebody
- 9 ran me off the road," would not justify the court -- the
- 10 police in stopping the car, just to make sure that this
- 11 car was not the one that drove the guy off the road,
- 12 right?
- 13 MR. KLEVEN: That's right, Your Honor.
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Never mind drunkenness.
- 15 The tip doesn't say anything about drunkenness. It just
- 16 said, this car drove me off the road. You'd say the
- 17 police could not follow that car, pull him over, and --
- 18 and ask did you -- did you drive somebody off the road?
- 19 MR. KLEVEN: Your Honor, absolutely, the
- 20 police can follow that car, and that's what they should
- 21 do. And, in fact, that's what they did here. In this
- 22 case, there was a --
- 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: Following the car is going
- 24 to do them no good as to whether he drove -- drove
- 25 somebody off the road. They're not looking for a drunk.

- 1 They're looking for somebody who drove somebody off the
- 2 road, right?
- 3 MR. KLEVEN: Right. If they can't see any
- 4 erratic driving still going on, then where is it going
- 5 to go? They're not going to prosecute for the reckless
- 6 driving that allegedly took place 19 miles away, and
- 7 they have followed that car for an additional --
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: They could if the quy
- 9 admitted it, you know.
- 10 MR. KLEVEN: Other than that, Your Honor --
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: They could play Mutt and
- 12 Jeff with him and he -- oh, yeah, I did, yes.
- MR. KLEVEN: But, Your Honor, the -- the
- 14 person who's making the claim is -- is nowhere to be
- 15 found. She's gone. There's -- there's nowhere there.
- 16 So there's no additional investigation --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but you --
- 18 what if -- what if the person said, okay, my name is
- 19 this -- you know, my phone number is this; this guy
- 20 drove me off the road. They can't corroborate that
- 21 until they stop the guy. Or you're saying they have to?
- 22 They have to wait, they have to make the call, see if
- 23 the guy is there. Are you the guy that just called? So
- that guy's got to talk on his cell phone while he's
- 25 driving.

1 MR. KLEVEN: Well, what I'm saying is, yes, 2 they have to verify in some way so that they have some reason to believe that, in fact, the person that's 3 4 telling them this is actually the person that is being -- so I'd like to reserve the remainder of my 5 6 time. 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel. Mr. Laurence. 8 9 ORAL ARGUMENT OF JEFFREY M.K. LAURENCE 10 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS 11 MR. LAURENCE: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it 12 please the Court: 13 A police officer may act on an anonymous tip 14 that reports reckless or drunk driving by immediately 15 stopping the vehicle, without waiting to personally 16 observe dangerous driving that could threaten others. An officer can reasonably rely on such a tip 17 because the importance of the governmental interest in 18 protecting the public from the ongoing and immediate 19 20 threat of drunk driving outweighs the minimal intrusion 21 of a traffic stop. 22 Now, Petitioners argue that -- -2.3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Is every reckless 24 driving drunk driving? 25 MR. LAURENCE: I'm sorry?

- 1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Is every reckless
- 2 driving drunk driving?
- 3 MR. LAURENCE: Not every reckless driving is
- 4 drunk driving. But a report of reckless driving gives
- 5 reasonable suspicion that the person may be drunk, and
- 6 that's sufficient for the stop in this case.
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How about if somebody
- 8 just calls and says, X vehicle is driving recklessly,
- 9 says no more, doesn't describe how, doesn't give you any
- 10 details as to how they know it. Is that enough for
- 11 reasonable suspicion?
- 12 MR. LAURENCE: I would say that the term
- 13 "reckless" is. And the reason I say that is because
- 14 driving is something that's intimately familiar to the
- 15 average citizen. And when a citizen is going to call in
- 16 and make a report, when they use the language
- 17 "reckless," that has meaning. That describes a behavior
- 18 that poses an ongoing threat to the public.
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: But not necessarily
- 20 drunkenness. I think there -- there are a lot of people
- 21 that get tickets for reckless driving who have not
- 22 served jail terms for driving drunk. The two are far
- 23 from synonymous.
- 24 MR. LAURENCE: Well, I wouldn't say they're
- 25 synonymous, but I would say that one is the indicator of

- 1 the other because while you can --
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why? How about
- 3 speeding? There's plenty of people who speed regularly.
- 4 MR. LAURENCE: I would say a report of
- 5 speeding is not sufficient to have reasonable suspicion.
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Isn't that reckless
- 7 behavior? So how do you know someone who calls -- my
- 8 mother, who can't drive above 50, thinks that, when I go
- 9 51, that I'm speeding and reckless.
- 10 MR. LAURENCE: I would say that, once again,
- 11 the public has lots of familiarity with driving, and
- 12 they can recognize the difference between poor driving
- 13 and reckless driving, or something, or drunk driving.
- 14 And when people are going to pick up the phone and make
- 15 that call to 911, they're doing so because they perceive
- 16 a danger on the roadway.
- 17 And I think while the statistics are sparse
- 18 on this, the footnote 2 in the government's brief is
- 19 particularly helpful in this regard, in that they note
- 20 that for calls that are made to 911 centers for -- that
- 21 are tracked by the States, between 25 and 50 percent of
- 22 those calls result in arrests. And what that shows is
- 23 that the public knows what they see when they make these
- 24 calls.
- 25 This is a far --

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: And -- and between the,
- 2 what, 50 and 75 percent, they've stopped people without
- 3 just cause.
- 4 MR. LAURENCE: Yes, but we are talking about
- 5 reasonable suspicion. So it doesn't require certainty
- 6 or probability.
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: Or they've -- they've
- 8 troubled people who shouldn't have been troubled.
- 9 MR. LAURENCE: That is correct. And that is
- 10 always a possibility in the reasonable suspicion
- 11 context.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What -- what if the
- 13 call is -- you know, I'm driving, this guy just drove by
- 14 me, I looked over, he didn't have his seatbelt on. I
- 15 mean, can the police pull that guy over?
- MR. LAURENCE: No, I don't believe that
- 17 would be sufficient to pull him over because you don't
- 18 have any governmental -- you don't have a threat to
- 19 public safety in that context.
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, there are laws
- 21 against driving without a seatbelt because that protects
- 22 people's lives.
- 23 MR. LAURENCE: Certainly, there are laws,
- 24 and the officer, I guess, would have reasonable
- 25 suspicion that there is a traffic violation, but I don't

- 1 know that it would rise to the level of implicating
- 2 public safety in this context.
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, reckless driving
- 4 always does, whether it -- whether it's the consequence
- 5 of inebriation or not.
- 6 MR. LAURENCE: Yes.
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: So a simple call saying,
- 8 boy, this guy -- you know, he cut in, in front of me.
- 9 He's changing lanes too frequently --
- 10 MR. LAURENCE: Yes.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- that -- that enables the
- 12 policeman, without observing any of that reckless
- driving, to stop the car further down the road.
- MR. LAURENCE: Yes. And provided, of
- 15 course, that you have the additional details of the
- 16 description of the car, the location, that you can --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I've never
- 18 understood -- what good do those -- you know, let's say
- 19 that I'm at a party, I don't like somebody there. I see
- 20 they have a couple of drinks. I know what kind of car
- 21 he drives. I know the -- I can look at the license
- 22 plate.
- 23 I call -- you know, ten minutes later. I
- 24 know where he goes driving home. There's this car.
- 25 It's a white whatever. It's got this license plate.

- 1 It's swerving all over the road.
- 2 MR. LAURENCE: Well --
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Whether he is or
- 4 not, the police go up, they pull him over and find out,
- 5 yes, yes -- you know, he fails the breathalyzer, and I
- 6 get my revenge.
- 7 MR. LAURENCE: The importance of those
- 8 details is that they allow the officers to confirm that
- 9 this is a personal observation, which is an important
- 10 fact that's noted in Gates, that when you have a report
- 11 of personal observation of illegal conduct, we can take
- 12 that report more seriously.
- 13 It's entitled to more credibility than just
- 14 a bare --
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: My question --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I was just going to
- 17 say my point is it need not necessarily be a personal
- 18 observation of the person operating the car. It may be
- 19 prior knowledge. And I gather one of the issues we're
- 20 concerned about is people using this to -- you know,
- 21 exact revenge or -- or do something else having nothing
- 22 to do with whether or not the person is violating the
- 23 law on the highway.
- 24 MR. LAURENCE: Yes, that is true. But if
- 25 the personal knowledge -- if the officer can use that

- 1 personal knowledge to confirm, okay, he was correct
- 2 about the report of the car, report of the location,
- 3 report of the direction where it's supposed to be going,
- 4 then you have some indication that the personal
- 5 knowledge is accurate, as opposed to a bare tip when
- 6 you're talking about hidden conduct, then you have to
- 7 look to predicted details.
- 8 And that takes us into the J.L. context or
- 9 the --
- 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: If I understand you
- 11 correctly, as long as you can identify the car, you need
- 12 no specificity as to what the car has actually done. In
- 13 other words -- you know, just saying the driver was
- 14 reckless is enough. Is that -- is that correct?
- 15 MR. LAURENCE: Well, I would say that
- 16 recklessness carries information that is -- has some
- 17 specificity.
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: What would fail your test?
- 19 MR. LAURENCE: Well, if a caller calls in
- 20 and says, I saw him in a bar, he had one drink, he came
- 21 out and got on the road and went away. One drink is not
- 22 going to rise to the level --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yes. But you're just
- 24 saying -- I mean, but his basic point is, on the other
- 25 side, is these are all variations of the famous white

- 1 horse defense. You don't know the -- the white horse
- 2 defense? Your Honor, my client was innocent because, at
- 3 the time of the crime, he was in Yuqoslavia wearing a
- 4 white horse -- riding a white horse.
- 5 And to prove it, I have the horse here in
- 6 court. You see? I mean, you can't -- it's
- 7 bootstrapping to put it more succinctly. All you know
- 8 is that somebody came in and quoted -- and said there
- 9 was a crime. And that's all you know. And now -- now
- 10 when -- when are instances where no more than the report
- 11 that it's a crime, that's reasonable suspicion.
- 12 That's -- give me some other instances where
- 13 the courts have upheld, well, that's enough.
- 14 MR. LAURENCE: Well, if a caller says --
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: I'm not saying common
- 16 sense. I'm saying what the courts have held. Sorry.
- 17 (Laughter.)
- 18 MR. LAURENCE: Where the courts have upheld
- 19 based on just a bare tip or --
- 20 JUSTICE BREYER: Not a bare tip, a
- 21 description that a crime is occurring, where has --
- 22 that's all, I mean, and -- and then we have a question
- of, well, is it in the one category or the other?
- 24 Because what we have here, someone phones in and says, a
- 25 crime is occurring.

- 1 And -- and we know, we've corroborated the
- 2 following. If a crime is occurring, he was in a
- 3 position to know because he can define -- he can talk
- 4 about the white horse, or he can talk about the car.
- 5 MR. LAURENCE: The closest case I can think
- of is Hensley, where an officer was relying on an arrest
- 7 bulletin from another jurisdiction. And in that case,
- 8 United States v. Hensley, in that case, the court did
- 9 consider, for purposes of whether a prior crime had been
- 10 committed, whether the officer had reasonable suspicion
- 11 to stop that individual, it took into account the nature
- 12 of the offense and whether there's a current threat to
- 13 public safety.
- 14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, correct me if I'm
- 15 wrong, but my recollection of Hensley is, you're right,
- 16 the police department 1 notifies police department 2.
- 17 But a premise of the case, I had thought, was that
- 18 police department 1 had reasonable suspicion.
- MR. LAURENCE: Well, there were two parts to
- 20 the -- to the case. The second -- the first part was
- 21 whether you could make a detention based on a prior
- 22 crime, as opposed to current -- an immediate occurring
- 23 crime.
- 24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I understand.
- 25 MR. LAURENCE: And so it looked to the

- 1 nature of the crime and whether there was threat to
- 2 public safety is a validation consideration in
- 3 authorizing a stop for a prior offense.
- 4 The second part of that was the -- allowing
- 5 the officer to rely on another jurisdiction
- 6 is reasonable --
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Hensley's victim wasn't
- 8 a victim; meaning there was -- it was an anonymous tip?
- 9 MR. LAURENCE: No, it was from another
- 10 police jurisdiction.
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yes, that's what I'm
- 12 saying. So it wasn't an anonymous tip?
- MR. LAURENCE: No, it was not an anonymous
- 14 tip.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It wasn't public safety.
- 16 It was the report of a crime by a known person.
- 17 MR. LAURENCE: Yes, it was. And in that
- 18 case, the Court said that you could arrest for prior --
- 19 for a prior offense, if it was a felony. It reserved
- 20 the question of whether you could do so for a
- 21 misdemeanor. So it's already looking at the nature of
- 22 the offense and the threat to public safety.
- 23 JUSTICE KAGAN: And, Mr. Laurence, do I
- 24 understand what you're saying? You're saying that in
- 25 every case when we have to decide whether the threshold

- 1 level of reasonable suspicion has been met or whether
- 2 the level of probable cause has been met, that courts
- 3 can take into account the seriousness of the offense,
- 4 and what would not count as probable cause for one crime
- 5 will count as probable cause for another? Is that what
- 6 you're saying?
- 7 MR. LAURENCE: What I'm saying is that, in
- 8 terms of when we can deem a tip reliable -- White
- 9 identified two components to the inquiry. One is the
- 10 indicia of reliability, and the other was the content of
- 11 the tip. And so we have to take the seriousness of the
- 12 offense and the threat to public safety into account, in
- 13 determining when the officer can rely on that
- 14 information.
- 15 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I don't understand how
- 16 what you're saying is different from what I just said,
- 17 and that would seem to me to work quite a substantial
- 18 change in -- in Fourth Amendment law, that when we
- 19 decide whether reasonable suspicion exists, when --
- 20 whether probable cause exists, that we get to take into
- 21 account how serious the offense is.
- MR. LAURENCE: Well, I think, since the
- 23 inception of the doctrine, this Court identified in
- 24 Terry that reasonable suspicion results from a balancing
- 25 of the governmental interest --

- 1 JUSTICE KAGAN: The balancing occurs
- 2 categorically. We decide that there's a reasonable
- 3 suspicion standard by balancing interests. What we
- 4 don't do is say -- you know, depending on how serious we
- 5 think this crime is, more or less will meet that
- 6 reasonable suspicion standard.
- 7 That would be a very substantial reworking
- 8 of Fourth Amendment law -- or so it seems to me. Maybe
- 9 I'm wrong.
- 10 MR. LAURENCE: Well, I believe that was
- 11 something that was indicated in Hensley. This Court
- 12 looked to the nature of the offense in deciding whether
- or not the officer had reasonable suspicion at the
- 14 inception in making that stop for a crime that had
- 15 occurred two weeks earlier.
- 16 And it didn't -- it declined to consider
- 17 whether or not that would be sufficient for a
- 18 misdemeanor. But in taking the seriousness of the crime
- into account, in determining whether or not they could
- 20 make that stop, that's a recognition that balancing does
- 21 play some role.
- 22 And in White, this Court recognized that the
- 23 reliability component is variable. There's a difference
- 24 between probable cause and reasonable suspicion. And in
- 25 J.L., this Court left open the question of at what point

- 1 do we need no reliability because of the seriousness of
- 2 the government --
- 3 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Could you explain to me
- 4 one more time why it's relevant that there were these
- 5 details that it was a particular kind of crime, that it
- 6 was silver, the license plate, that's this case.
- 7 Suppose in another case, a car just ran me off the road,
- 8 and it's the only -- the only car that's on Highway 1
- 9 between Fort Bragg and the state park.
- MR. LAURENCE: Well, I think it helps
- 11 twofold. There's particularity, so you know who you're
- 12 stopping. And it goes to the totality of the
- 13 circumstances in helping confirm that the person
- 14 actually observed what they're saying.
- 15 So that you have -- it goes to the
- 16 reliability of the personal observation. So it
- 17 builds -- it adds an additional layer of -- of the
- 18 indices reliability so the officer can rely on it
- 19 sooner.
- 20 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And incidentally -- it
- 21 doesn't have much to do with the case -- is this a
- 22 two -- a two-lane road?
- 23 MR. LAURENCE: Yes, it is, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's what I thought.
- MR. LAURENCE: Two-lane coastal highway,

- 1 which, obviously, when someone runs somebody off the
- 2 road, poses a grave threat to public safety in that
- 3 context.
- 4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: There's a tip that
- 5 someone is carrying a concealed weapon, and we have held
- 6 that that has to be corroborated -- corroborated. You
- 7 can take out a concealed weapon in an instant and fire
- 8 it and kill lots of people. In fact, it was pointed out
- 9 that there are more deaths caused by guns than there are
- 10 from drunk driving.
- 11 So what's the difference? The -- the
- 12 argument on the drunk driving is very, very dangerous,
- 13 but so is having a gun in one's pocket.
- 14 MR. LAURENCE: Well, I think there's a
- 15 significant difference between having a gun in your
- 16 pocket and actually brandishing it or firing it. I
- 17 think, if the J.L. case involved somebody threatening
- 18 other people with a gun or firing the gun, it would have
- 19 involved a different calculus.
- 20 And so --
- 21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But if you -- once --
- 22 once you brandish it, it's too late. The damage will be
- 23 caused.
- 24 MR. LAURENCE: That is -- that is correct.
- 25 But once you're driving drunk down the road, it's -- you

- 1 have -- the threat is now posed to everybody on the
- 2 highway because of the potential for that person to lose
- 3 control because --
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Of course, this call didn't
- 5 say, I think the guy was drunk. It just said, somebody
- 6 drove -- you know, drove me off the road.
- 7 MR. LAURENCE: Yes.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Right? So this isn't -- it
- 9 isn't a call that says there's a drunken driver. It's
- 10 just a call that says somebody drove irresponsibly,
- 11 right? And that's enough to stop them.
- MR. LAURENCE: Well, I would say -- I would
- 13 say that, in this case, it is enough. But I would say
- 14 it's more than just driving irresponsibly. Running
- 15 somebody off the road reflects that they're incapable of
- 16 driving their car in a way that's -- without posing a
- 17 safety threat to other people, and when you're dealing
- 18 with reasonable suspicion --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay. Really
- 20 irresponsibly, okay?
- 21 MR. LAURENCE: Okay.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Really irresponsibly.
- MR. LAURENCE: Very irresponsibly.
- 24 JUSTICE KAGAN: So do you think,
- 25 Mr. Laurence, if the police had followed this man for

- 1 half an hour and seen no other signs of erratic
- 2 driving and nobody can drunk drive -- can drive drunk
- 3 for half an hour without swerving, without doing
- 4 something else.
- 5 So they could still have stopped the car?
- 6 MR. LAURENCE: I think there may be a point
- 7 where the threat to public safety would suggest that the
- 8 reasonable suspicion is dissipated in that context. And
- 9 so after -- after 50 miles --
- 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I thought you were
- 11 saying as long as somebody had -- had given an account
- 12 that, some time ago, he had driven another driver off --
- 13 he had run another driver off the road, doesn't matter
- 14 whether you're drunk, doesn't matter anything, there was
- 15 an account of an illegal act taking place, and that was
- 16 enough to stop him. It doesn't matter what he's doing
- 17 now.
- 18 MR. LAURENCE: Well, I believe that the
- 19 threat to public safety plays a role in the balance.
- 20 And so if that's dissipated, then at that point, you
- 21 have -- the -- the reliability of the tip that you're
- 22 relying on is not as significant. Put it this way:
- 23 When you have the threat to public safety balanced in
- the totality for purposes of reliability, if that
- 25 dissipates, then you have to go back to the tip itself,

- 1 whether it is internally reliable or whether it has
- 2 enough to satisfy J.L.
- 3 I think that, when you have an immediate
- 4 threat and you have a report of drunk driving, the
- 5 officer shouldn't have to wait to see that 50 miles, to
- 6 see if they can pass or fail.
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: It wasn't a report of drunk
- 8 driving.
- 9 MR. LAURENCE: I'm sorry. Yes. A report
- 10 that someone ran him off the road.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Somebody ran me off the
- 12 road. Somebody was driving really irresponsibly.
- MR. LAURENCE: Yes. Yes.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: That's enough to stop him
- 15 down the road.
- 16 MR. LAURENCE: It is, it is, because this is
- 17 how drunk drivers display their actions. And when
- 18 you're dealing with reasonable suspicion --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: What about cutting me off
- 20 too quickly, you know?
- 21 MR. LAURENCE: I think that --
- 22 JUSTICE SCALIA: Cuts right in front of me.
- 23 Really ticks me off.
- 24 (Laughter.)
- 25 MR. LAURENCE: That would present a

- 1 different set of circumstances. If you have an
- 2 instant -- a recognizable instant of bad driving as
- 3 opposed to something that reflects recklessness or
- 4 drunkenness, then you analyze the tip differently. And
- 5 I think that --
- 6 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, how would somebody --
- 7 how would somebody ever be able -- who observes another
- 8 car driving ever be able to say that person was drunk?
- 9 All they could -- all they could observe is what they
- 10 see. They don't know whether the person -- what is
- 11 causing that kind of behavior.
- MR. LAURENCE: I agree. And that's because
- 13 what we do -- we look to the nature of their driving,
- 14 draw reasonable inferences from that. And that's all
- 15 officers can ever do. When they observe something, they
- 16 draw reasonable inferences and determine whether it
- 17 gives them suspicion.
- One thing I would point out, that the CHP
- 19 dispatchers, the testimony in this case reflects that
- 20 they asked. They asked the driver, well, what did you
- 21 see? So that they can get that information and pass it
- 22 along to give the officers as much --
- 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: I think it's an entirely
- 24 different case if the tip -- if the tip here was -- you
- 25 know, I was at a party, this guy got in his car, he

- 1 should not have turned the key on in that car, this guy
- is really drunk, you should stop that car on the road.
- 4 somebody just saying, this guy swerved, or this guy
- 5 drove me off the road. You're -- you're just making the
- 6 assumption that -- that every -- every one of those
- 7 incidents demonstrates a drunk behind the wheel, and I
- 8 just don't think that's true.
- 9 MR. LAURENCE: Well, again, I would say it's
- 10 not about demonstrating. It's not about certainty or
- 11 probabilities. It's suspicion. And that behavior
- 12 allows the officer to suspect drunk driving.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, why is it limited to
- 14 drunk driving? I don't understand that. I've been --
- 15 I've been on an expressway, and I've had people go by
- 16 me at -- they went by in a blur. They must have been
- 17 going well over a hundred miles an hour.
- Now, if the police catch up with that
- 19 person, of course, the person's going to slow down while
- 20 the police follow the person. And then when the police
- 21 decide to stop, they're going to go back to engaging in
- 22 this intentional, extremely dangerous conduct.
- So I don't understand why there's a
- 24 distinction between reporting that somebody necessarily
- 25 is driving erratically, so the person may be impaired,

- 1 and somebody who is -- where you have extremely reckless
- 2 driving that's intentional.
- 3 MR. LAURENCE: Well, I wouldn't draw that
- 4 distinction. I think reckless driving, in and of
- 5 itself, can pose a threat to public safety that also
- 6 mandates an immediate stop. If someone's playing
- 7 chicken with another car on the road, if someone
- 8 is -- you know, testing out their new Ferrari, is going
- 9 a hundred miles an hour, weaving in and out of lanes,
- 10 those all represent threats to public safety.
- 11 All those circumstances --
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: But all crime represents a
- 13 threat to public safety, and yet, we have these
- 14 standards.
- 15 MR. LAURENCE: Yes, we do have standards.
- 16 But that -- the threat to public safety is part of the
- 17 totality of circumstances. It's not something you
- 18 invoke that wipes away all other inquiries. What we
- 19 have here is we have a tip that, if it was given by a
- 20 known person, I think would undoubtedly allow the
- 21 officer to pull that car over immediately.
- 22 The question is because it was anonymous --
- 23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Why? Why -- the -- we
- 24 have the case of the trusted informer. The informer
- 25 several times has given the police tips and it turned

- 1 out to be right. And then we have another side, the
- 2 anonymous person. Then there's somebody who calls,
- 3 gives a correct name and address, but no record at all
- 4 of reliability.
- 5 Why should the fact that the name is
- 6 known -- the name of the informant is known, if the
- 7 police have no reason to believe one way or another that
- 8 this informer is reliable?
- 9 MR. LAURENCE: Well, I believe that, when
- 10 you're looking at -- at what point it's reasonable for
- 11 the officer to rely on the content of that tip or to
- 12 rely on -- on that tip coming in and act on it, that
- 13 when somebody gives their name, that adds a layer of
- 14 reliability to it, even without verification.
- And I think one thing that Gates says in the
- 16 context of somebody who reports a -- a personal
- 17 observation of a crime is that even if we doubt their
- 18 veracity, even if we have some question as to their
- 19 motives, the fact that they are giving a personal
- 20 observation, they note that it's a personal observation,
- 21 and giving a detailed account of what occurs, that
- 22 report is entitled to a greater degree of reliability
- 23 than --
- 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: You don't think that a
- 25 teenager standing on a street corner with a couple of

- 1 other teenagers with a gun in his belt represents a
- 2 threat to public safety?
- 3 MR. LAURENCE: Not the same threat as in
- 4 this case, Your Honor.
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: No? All right.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 7 No, no. We're going to hear from Ms. Kovner
- 8 first.
- 9 Ms. Kovner.
- 10 ORAL ARGUMENT OF RACHEL P. KOVNER
- 11 FOR UNITED STATES, AS AMICUS CURIAE,
- 12 SUPPORTING THE RESPONDENTS
- MS. KOVNER: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 14 please the Court:
- Brief car stops based on anonymous tips of
- 16 reckless or drunken driving are reasonable under the
- 17 Fourth Amendment because they serve a critical
- 18 government interest in removing drunk drivers from the
- 19 road --
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. Please
- 21 define for me what behavior would give police officers
- 22 or what descriptors would be adequate for the police to
- 23 think someone's drunk. Swerving, I know, has been
- 24 mentioned. But reckless driving, there's been a lot of
- 25 discussion that there could be a wide variety of

- 1 reckless driving.
- 2 MS. KOVNER: So --
- 3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What -- what other
- 4 things would a -- would a caller have to say?
- 5 MS. KOVNER: So, Your Honor, I think -- I
- 6 agree with the observation that there are some behaviors
- 7 that pose an ongoing threat to others on the roadway,
- 8 and some driving violations that don't. NHTSA, the
- 9 National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration and
- 10 other organizations, do keep track of what kinds of
- 11 behavior are associated with drunkenness.
- 12 And the Court, in this case, of course,
- 13 looked at the particular behavior and said, is this
- 14 really a reckless driving behavior, the kind of behavior
- 15 that poses this imminent danger? So there is a line
- 16 that courts would need to draw, but the courts that are
- 17 engaging in this kind of analysis do draw that.
- 18 And of course --
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, what -- what goes on
- 20 the other side of the line? I mean, why -- why is this
- 21 on one side? And then tell me what's on the other.
- 22 MS. KOVNER: Sure. So examples of behavior
- 23 on the other might be a seatbelt violation, and they
- 24 also might be behaviors that it's a real judgment call
- 25 whether a violation occurred or not.

1 So for instance, that person didn't fully 2 stop at a stop sign. We might have doubts about whether 3 an informant, who we don't know anything about, can 4 accurately perceive that. But when we're talking about 5 behavior like --6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I think what you're 7 saying to me, am I correct, that almost any moving violation counts? Changing a lane without a signal, 8 9 which seems to be endemic in Washington, but --10 (Laughter.) 11 MS. KOVNER: I think that would be a harder 12 case. I'm not sure that it's correlated with -- with 13 intoxication or impairment. As you say, it's very 14 common, but I think the behavior that we're talking 15 about here, driving somebody else off the road, is the 16 kind of behavior that shows this person is a --17 JUSTICE KAGAN: How about somebody cutting someone off in their lane? 18 I think that's close to the 19 MS. KOVNER: 20 line, Your Honor. I'm not sure that it's always 21 illegal, and it's something where we may have doubts 22 about whether the informant can accurately separate this 23 person was breaking the law from this person wasn't. I 24 think the courts are going to have to answer the 25 question of whether this is the -- you know, kind of

- 1 behavior that poses --
- 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, where does
- 3 that -- I think this is the question Justice Kagan asked
- 4 earlier -- how does the nature of the offense affect the
- 5 reasonableness of the suspicion?
- 6 MS. KOVNER: So --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I mean, in either
- 8 case, you have -- let's say the seatbelt and the
- 9 swerving driver. It's the same witness. He said,
- 10 still, it's a white Ford. The reasonableness of the
- 11 suspicion would seem, to me, to be totally divorced from
- 12 what it's about.
- MS. KOVNER: I think that's true, Your
- 14 Honor, and we actually think and -- you know, we argued
- in our brief that there is reasonable suspicion here.
- 16 When an informant gives a basis for knowledge, you have
- 17 reason to think they are an eyewitness.
- 18 But the Court has also recognized that there
- 19 are certain dangers on the roadway that allow
- 20 intrusions, even when we might not otherwise allow them.
- 21 So, for instance, in the Sitz case, the Court said drunk
- 22 that drunk driving is such a great danger that we're
- 23 going to allow even random stops of vehicles to detect
- 24 drunk drivers. So I think the court has indicated there
- 25 are certain driving behaviors that are so dangerous

- 1 we'll allow even suspicionless stops.
- 2 And here, of course, we're not dealing with
- 3 suspicionless stops. The questions from the Court have
- 4 indicated some of the reasons why that's the case.
- 5 Here, we have a caller who has demonstrated their basis
- 6 for knowledge, and officers have been able to confirm
- 7 that. So we're talking about tips where the person
- 8 relays the kind of details you can really only have if
- 9 you are an eyewitness to this person's driving on the
- 10 road.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's just
- 12 not true. It's -- it's an acquaintance, I know what
- 13 kind of car he drives, I know where he's going. I
- 14 didn't see anything on the road, but I call the police
- 15 and say, oh, there's this -- you know, white Ford
- 16 swerving all over the road.
- 17 MS. KOVNER: So, Your Honor, I think this
- 18 class of people who are going to have the relevant
- 19 knowledge is almost exclusively eyewitnesses. You may
- 20 also have a few people who have seen the person's car
- 21 and happen to know what direction they're headed in, but
- 22 for the most part, we're talking about a very narrow
- 23 class of individuals that are largely going to be
- 24 eyewitnesses to this person's driving on the road.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, I'm talking

- 1 about the concern that you want to have the police pull
- 2 over people that you don't like, where you know
- 3 somebody's got something bad in the car, and you don't
- 4 like it, and so you're going to take advantage of the
- 5 fact that the police don't have to observe anything, and
- 6 yet, you can still get them to pull over this person.
- 7 MS. KOVNER: So somebody who's malicious,
- 8 who's a prankster, is still going to have this kind of
- 9 specialized knowledge, and that's not something a
- 10 malicious prankster is necessarily going to have. I --
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Why is that different
- 12 from the knowledge in J.L., that they were three young
- 13 men, and they were described, and the caller said, "The
- one with the gun is the one with the plaid shirt." All
- of that was corroborated by the police, and yet, we held
- 16 that that was no indication that a crime had been
- 17 committed.
- 18 MS. KOVNER: Your Honor, I think the
- 19 critical thing that's present here that wasn't present
- 20 in J.L. is the basis for knowledge. So as the passage
- 21 that Justice Breyer read signals, we're talking there
- 22 about concealed criminal activity, and the Court pointed
- 23 out in that case there's nothing in the tip that signals
- 24 how the informant knows this person had a gun.
- 25 Here, in contrast, the person is telling you

- 1 "I'm an eyewitness. This person just ran me off the
- 2 road."
- 3 JUSTICE KAGAN: But then you think J.L.
- 4 would have come out differently if the tipster had said,
- 5 "I just saw these guys and I saw -- you know, one of
- 6 them had a gun"?
- 7 MS. KOVNER: I think this case comes out
- 8 differently for two reasons. One is, yes, the tip would
- 9 be stronger than the tip in J.L., if the person related
- 10 eyewitness basis. But the second has to do with the
- imminent danger here that's posed by a car that's moving
- down the roadway and that's being operated by a
- 13 potentially drunk driver, and the reduced expectations
- 14 of privacy you have when you're talking about a vehicle
- 15 stop.
- And those were front and center in Sitz,
- 17 where the Court said that even suspicionless stops can
- 18 be justified by that particular danger.
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yeah, but that -- but that
- 20 second danger -- you may have a drunken driver on the
- 21 road; that danger can be eliminated by following the
- 22 car. You don't have to stop the car right away. You
- 23 can follow it and if, indeed, the driver seems to be
- 24 driving erratically, then you can stop. You'd have
- 25 probable cause.

- I don't think you have to automatically
- 2 allow a stop in order to prevent all of the horribles
- 3 that are going to arise from drunk driving. Follow the
- 4 car. If he's behaving like a drunk driver, then stop
- 5 him.
- 6 MS. KOVNER: Your Honor, officers could
- 7 follow the car, and if they do, they may witness a
- 8 subsequent dangerous behavior that could justify pulling
- 9 over the car. The problem is that the subsequent
- 10 dangerous behavior they may observe may be the car
- 11 swerving into another lane and hitting another vehicle.
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: That is so remote. I mean,
- 13 it seems to me you're asking us to adopt a broad rule
- 14 that is contrary to what we normally do for searches and
- 15 seizures because, now and then, it would seem, to me,
- 16 very rarely, before the police can stop the drunk
- 17 driver, he kills somebody.
- 18 I mean, I suppose that could happen now and
- 19 then but it's pretty fanciful.
- 20 MS. KOVNER: Your Honor, I don't think it's
- 21 a remote harm at all. Now, this is a harm that causes
- 22 one-third of all traffic accidents, that takes tens of
- 23 thousands of lives a year, and it's a harm that this
- 24 Court has always said is a harm of the first order that
- 25 justifies the kind of intrusions that we might not

- 1 otherwise allow in --
- 2 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But here, we have the
- 3 police did follow the vehicle for about 5 miles and saw
- 4 nothing erratic about the driving. So perhaps, if the
- 5 police had immediately stopped the person or -- but
- 6 don't -- don't we have to take account that there was no
- 7 corroboration? The police get there. Even if they
- 8 could stop him instantly, when they have no
- 9 corroboration, then that doesn't amount to reasonable
- 10 suspicion.
- 11 MS. KOVNER: Your Honor, I agree that police
- 12 might follow a car for such a long period of time that
- 13 the reasonable suspicion would dissipate. On the facts
- 14 of this case, Your Honor, the record indicates there
- 15 were five minutes between when the officers first saw
- 16 the car and when they pulled it over.
- 17 They weren't five minutes of uninterrupted
- 18 observation. They were five minutes in which the
- 19 officers were turning their cars around because they
- 20 were headed in the opposite direction, were catching up
- 21 to a car along the freeway. So the California Supreme
- 22 Court analyzed that delay and found the fact that they
- 23 didn't observe additional --
- 24 JUSTICE BREYER: I don't know if we have to
- 25 get into the drunk driving. It's 3 miles south of the

- 1 Humboldt County border on -- do you know the answer to
- 2 this? Is it in the record? I mean, on many sections of
- 3 that road, in Mendocino County, you drive someone off
- 4 the road, they are dead.
- I mean, there are sheer drops, and so I just
- 6 wonder, if I look that up here, what's the situation
- 7 where this supposedly took place?
- 8 MS. KOVNER: The only thing I can point to
- 9 about that, Your Honor, is the way that the California
- 10 Supreme Court treated this, which is that, because they
- 11 pointed to the fact that this is a two-lane highway and
- 12 that it's particularly dangerous on this particular road
- 13 to engage in this behavior.
- 14 But I don't know about -- you know, whether
- 15 there are cliffs on the side of the road.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What about the
- 17 danger from the police side? In other words, they
- 18 know -- or they suspect that the guy driving the white
- 19 car has a lot of marijuana in the trunk. They have no
- 20 basis for pulling him over. And they say, well, guess
- 21 what, we got an anonymous tip that he was driving
- 22 erratically, so we pulled him over.
- 23 MS. KOVNER: Your Honor --
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What protection is
- 25 there against that?

1 MS. KOVNER: Your Honor, if police are 2 willing to lie about what they saw or -- you know, in the cases of some roque officers, they may exist, but 3 4 this rule isn't going to prevent -- no rule is going to prevent that. Officers could just as easily lie about 5 6 what they saw. 7 Thank you. Thank you, counsel. 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: 9 Mr. Kleven, you have 3 minutes remaining. 10 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF PAUL R. KLEVEN, 11 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS, 12 APPOINTED BY THIS COURT 13 MR. KLEVEN: In this case, we're talking 14 about a single uncorroborated tip of reckless driving. 15 After that single incident, the car -- the truck went 16 for approximately 19 miles with no indication of any other problem and then was followed for up to 5 miles by 17 the police officers, again, with no indication of any 18 erratic driving or any other violation that would have 19 20 been a reason for pulling him over immediately. 21 There's no reason to believe that the driver 22 of this truck presented any kind of danger about being 23 about to lose control, which is the argument that the 24 State is relying on, and the Federal government, and 25 neither one of them came up with any anecdote, even,

- 1 where that actually occurred, much less any statistics
- 2 that show that that is a serious problem, of people
- 3 losing control while they're being under surveillance by
- 4 the police officers.
- 5 This case is even farther away from the bomb
- 6 situation than J.L. was. In J.L., you had a person who
- 7 was armed, who could have pulled out a gun and started
- 8 firing at any moment. Here, you have something where
- 9 there's no indication of any ongoing risk to the public.
- 10 I don't think -- I don't know that there's a good answer
- 11 to the bomb question.
- I read through the transcript from the oral
- 13 argument in J.L. I didn't see any -- you know, there
- 14 didn't seem to be any good arguments -- any good
- 15 discussions there, either, as to which way the Court
- 16 could go.
- But this case -- in J.L., the Court said,
- 18 there's no reason for us to resolve that. We don't have
- 19 to speculate about a situation where that would happen.
- 20 In this case, I submit, there's even less reason for the
- 21 Court to speculate about the bomb situation or even the
- 22 kidnapping situation.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I find that
- 24 unsatisfactory because if you -- unless you're willing
- 25 to say, it doesn't matter whether it's a bomb, an atomic

- 1 bomb, a little bomb, then there -- there must be -- if
- 2 you're going to draw the line someplace, then you're
- 3 going to have to distinguish between those reports of
- 4 crimes that are serious enough to be on one side of the
- 5 line and those reports of a crime that are not serious
- 6 enough to be on that side of the line.
- 7 You either have to go all the way, or you
- 8 have to draw a line, and if you're going to draw a line,
- 9 I would like to know where the line is.
- 10 MR. KLEVEN: Well, Your Honor, except I
- 11 don't think -- I don't think you can draw the line in
- 12 terms of reasonable suspicion because, then, you're
- 13 going to have this --
- 14 JUSTICE ALITO: All right. Forget about
- 15 reasonable suspicion. Just can it be done?
- 16 MR. KLEVEN: Well, certainly, Your Honor --
- 17 JUSTICE ALITO: You can say it can never
- 18 done, even if it's an atomic bomb, even if it's some
- 19 other type of bomb. You can say that. Or you can say,
- 20 no, there's a line someplace. If you're going to say
- 21 there's a line someplace, then, really, I think you need
- 22 to tell us where the line is.
- 23 MR. KLEVEN: Your Honor, I think the line is
- 24 certainly, when we get into the bomb situation, but not
- 25 in terms of reasonable suspicion. The severity of the

- 1 crime does not affect it, but the Court could fashion a
- 2 rule that would say there's an exception in this case
- 3 that would apply --
- 4 JUSTICE ALITO: For a bomb. For any kind of
- 5 a bomb?
- 6 MR. KLEVEN: Well, I don't think -- I think
- 7 if -- if there's a call in that --
- 8 JUSTICE ALITO: It has to be a big bomb.
- 9 MR. KLEVEN: -- that says a white -- a white
- 10 Prius has a bomb -- you know, that doesn't seem to be
- 11 the sort of case under the -- under the established
- 12 circumstances where this Court would find a reasonable
- 13 suspicion --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: What about drawing the line
- 15 at intentional conduct? The guy who has a bomb is going
- 16 to use it. He's intentionally going to use it.
- 17 MR. KLEVEN: Well --
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: Or maybe intentionally
- doing an action that is going to harm more than one
- 20 person, as opposed to, hmm, maybe this person might
- 21 accidentally, because he's inebriated, hurt somebody?
- It seems to me there's a clear line between
- 23 somebody who's -- who's bent on an intentional crime and
- 24 somebody who might harm somebody because of his conduct.
- 25 You like that one?

- 1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Yes, I have another
- 2 one, too.
- 3 MR. KLEVEN: Yes, Your Honor, I think
- 4 those -- those are two significant distinctions,
- 5 certainly, between the -- the bomb analogy and the
- 6 situation, even in the drunken driving situation, where
- 7 you don't have anybody who is intentionally trying to
- 8 harm anyone and the magnitude of the risk is -- is much
- 9 greater. The --
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So somebody has five
- 11 drinks and goes and gets in the car, that's not
- 12 intentionally trying to harm someone? Or recklessly
- 13 trying to harm --
- 14 MR. KLEVEN: Well, in terms of their --
- 15 their decision to get drunk, there's intent there, in
- 16 terms of -- by the time the officer becomes aware of it,
- 17 there's no indication that that drunk driver is going
- 18 down the road trying to harm somebody.
- 19 There is an indication that they may be
- 20 too -- too inebriated to be driving properly, and police
- 21 officers are pulling people over for that situation
- 22 since the car was invented, and they're really good at
- 23 it.
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 25 MR. KLEVEN: Thank you.

1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel.
2	The case is submitted.
3	(Whereupon, at 2:01 p.m., the case in the
4	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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